



Testing Your Private Domestic Well

Approximately two million Californians get their drinking water from either private domestic wells or other small groundwater systems not regulated by the state. If you have a private domestic well, you may want to learn more about its water quality.

Suggested Analytical Tests for Private Domestic Wells:

- Basic Annual:
 - Total Coliform Bacteria
 - Fecal coliform (only if total coliform are detected)
 - Nitrate
 - Total Dissolved Solids (electrical conductivity)
- Every five to ten years:
 - Trace metals (including arsenic, lead, manganese)
 - General minerals
- Wells near landfills, industry, dry cleaners, gas stations, or automobile repair shops:
 - VOCs, metals, and petroleum hydrocarbons
- Wells near agricultural and livestock areas:
 - Pesticides
- Test more frequently if a change in electrical conductivity, taste, color, odor, or land use occurs

Request a Cost Estimate: Basic well testing varies between \$100 and \$400 per well, primarily depending on the number of chemicals to be tested. An accredited drinking water analytical laboratory can provide a well owner with a written cost estimate to test your well water. Many analytical laboratories will provide you with the containers to collect water samples. In addition, many environmental consulting firms will sample and report the test results for you, but at an additional cost.

Understanding Analytical Test Results: It may be helpful to compare test results to the standards used by the California Department of Public Health for regulating public drinking water systems since the state does not regulate private domestic well water quality. If any test result is above a comparative public drinking water standard, you may want to consider re-testing your well prior to making any decision on installing a treatment system or securing an alternative water supply.

Additional Information can be found at http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/gama/wq_privatewells.shtml. Available material includes links to accredited water quality testing laboratories, comparative public drinking water standards, and a “Guide for Domestic Well Owners.” The well owners guide, also available in Spanish, includes a typical domestic well construction diagram, trouble-shooting information for typical well problems, and photographs of common well maintenance issues.

Questions?: Private well owners with additional questions may wish to contact their local environmental health agency, or contact the GAMA Program Manager, John Borkovich at either 916-341-5779 or jborkovich@waterboards.ca.gov.